

Jeanne Keenan
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Coshocton's Tea Party

Jeanne Keenan spent 20 fulfilling years teaching children, but she had reached a point in her life where she needed a new challenge. There is perhaps nothing as challenging as owning and operating your own business, and that is the challenge that Jeanne accepted. And, it wasn't just any business; it was a business in a very high risk industry. In March of 2003, Jeanne opened her Serenity Tea House in Coshocton, Ohio. Serenity Tea House is a restaurant that serves breakfast and lunch entrees and it also houses a gift shop that sells teas, teapots and cups.

The idea for Serenity Tea House arose from Jeanne's teaching experience where she would host tea parties for her students. She felt that a market existed for a specialty restaurant that would target clientele seeking a unique dining experience, one that would promote an atmosphere that encouraged them to sit and talk. Jeanne just needed some help turning her idea into reality. That's when Jeanne turned to the Ohio Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Kent State University Tuscarawas Campus.

SBDC Director Pat Comanitz assisted Jeanne in the development of her business plan and site selection. Once a viable plan was completed, Jeanne needed funding to get her venture opened. Financing was provided through an SBA guaranteed loan made by Unizan Bank, as well as through a loan extended by the Omega Revolving Loan Fund. "I know that without the help of Pat Comanitz and Lolly Ravak of the Omega Revolving Loan Fund, as well as Unizan Bank and SBA, I would not be here today," states Ms. Keenan. "Pat and Lolly's help and commitment to my success are what got Serenity Tea started".

There is no other similar restaurant and gift shop in the Coshocton area. Serenity Tea House pampers its customers with its great atmosphere and food. Jeanne wanted to do more than serve food at her business – she wanted to enrich lives. "People come here to eat, and they develop a real connection to this place," says Ms. Keenan. "They write me thank you notes and send me valued linens that either they or their mothers made because they know I will use them as table decorations to further embellish Serenity's atmosphere".

Owning and operating a small business creates constant challenges, and Jeanne faces continual challenges like finding and keeping good employees or managing her business's cash flow. But Jeanne Keenan continues to persevere and grow her successful business. She was seeking a challenge when she opened Serenity Tea House, so she wouldn't have it any other way!